

## ***“WHY PUBLIC SERVICE”\****

Good morning everyone, my name is Georgina Acosta and today I will be discussing briefly what employment opportunities are available to you in the Public Sector, as well as why you should consider the USDA as your choice for employment.

The question before us is “Why Public Service”?

My answer in short is location, location, location! We in the Federal Service can give you the world and the moon. And I do mean that literally! Federal employment is nationwide as well as overseas. And what other entity than the government, which is the biggest stakeholder in sending our astronauts to the moon and exploring the boundaries of space.

Public Service is a vital part of America, and has many faces. The 20 million men and women who serve in government live and work in every town, in every state throughout the nation, and in hundreds of cities abroad. The work of public service employees at some point, touches and enriches your lives. From the mail we receive to the foods that we consume, they, are all inspected for safety by federal employees. The military personnel who have dedicated their lives to our safety and protection of our freedom; Park Rangers protecting our National Forests; cancer researchers who improve the quality of our lives; scientists who work hard to eliminating hunger, addressing obesity in the U.S. through the human nutrition programs; and yes all the way to sending astronauts into outer space...; and many many other items in between are all provided to the common public by those in Public Service.

These are just some of the many things we take for granted. Public service employees, such as myself, and hopefully you in the near future, are a vital part of our daily lives. In these few statements, I hope I have conveyed the scope, impact and importance of public service employees contribute to the well-being of U.S. citizens. SERVICE is the key word for all Federal employees enjoyed in Public Service!

The job is rewarding because Federal Employees make a difference in the lives of people. But Public Service is also rewarding from an employment point of view. The job benefits in the USDA include:

- Competitive Salary, with job security
- Relocation bonuses or expenses
- Signing bonuses in hard to fill disciplines
- Earn anywhere from 13 to 26 vacation days Annual and Sick Leave Benefits
- Healthy retirement savings plan which includes both Social Security and 401(K) benefits, with matching contributions.
- Tuition reimbursement, for past and future studies to improve job skills
- Annual salary increases, both merit and cost-of-living

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\* Complete text of the invited presentation by Georgina Acosta (Program Analyst, USDA/ARS/SRRC, New Orleans, LA) made at the June 25-29, 2002, 73<sup>rd</sup> LULAC (League of United Latin American Countries) Annual Meeting, Houston, TX. The presentation was part of a Youth Workshop organized by the USDA Hispanic Employment Manager, Mr. Harry Salinas, Washington, D.C.

- Family - friendly policies include:

- a. Alternative work schedule (flextime) to improve your quality of family life.
- b. Child and elder care resources, and paid leave for caring for both.
- c. Leave donor programs for prolonged absence due to illness.
- d. Part-time employment possible. And job sharing positions for easily learn another skill. You can be detailed to another position at your request to use those skills to move ahead.
- e. Life insurance/health insurance, with portability
- f. Child care facilities (at some locations)
- g. Credit unions for easy, on the job banking needs.
- h. Employee assistance programs.
- i. Transfers feasible to fit family needs of work location
- Career development and training facilities
- Interagency transfers also feasible for better career opportunities

### **Employment in U.S.D.A.**

At this time I would like to speak on and dispel some things about the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The USDA is not just confined to farming and crops; we embrace and engage in multiple disciplines of science, technology and business assignments. Here are some of the different vocations that conduct day to day business of the USDA.

Scientists, sociologists, psychologists, economists, meteorologists, animal husbandry specialists, engineers in all disciplines, etc. etc. etc.

Now, where in that list did you hear farming. Is there anything wrong with farming, NO!!, History has taught us that sound farming and agriculture have always been the backbone of every successful society or nation. But what sets the USDA apart is that we are as diverse in our careers as we are diverse in our employee pool. And we want to make you a part of that diversity that exists in our workplace.

Our mission i. e. USDA's mission is to enhance the quality of life for the American people by supporting production agriculture; ensuring a safe affordable nutritious and accessible food supply; caring for agricultural forest and rangelands; supporting rural communities, and their sound development; providing economic opportunities for farm and rural residents; expanding global markets for agricultural and forest products and services and working to reduce hunger in America and throughout the world.

### **Agricultural Research Service**

Now let me talk to you about a specific agency in USDA, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) which is the research wing of USDA. I am employee of that agency.

In the audience we have Dr. Deepak Bhatnagar from USDA-ARS-SRRC, New Orleans, LA. He is a Research Geneticist, who is currently researching the genetic make up of a fungus that grows

on certain crops throughout the world, and produces a very strong cancer causing compound on these crops. His primary goal is to find an effective way to prevent the fungus from making this toxin so that we can have safe food for human consumption and animal feed. Just yesterday Dr. Bhatnagar was educating us on how our agency, USDA-Agricultural Research Service is currently conducting research in exotic fields of agricultural science such as Space Agronomy; where, basically, biologists and chemists are utilizing all of their current knowledge of plant growth to try and figure out how these plants will grow in zero gravity in space. And our Agency (ARS) is also working with the Epcot Center in Florida on growing fruits and vegetables in water without soil; mimicking conditions that may be necessitated for plant growth in outer space.

Once again, in order to achieve the mission of USDA, many disciplines of science, technology and administration are required.

ARS employs in the following disciplines:

**Scientific:**

Agronomy	Aquaculture	Biochemistry	Biology
Botany	Chemistry	Computer Technology	Cotton, Technology
Ecology	Engineering	Entomology	Fish Biology
Food Technology	Genetics	Genomics	Geology
Horticulture	Immunology	Microbiology	Microscopy, Electron
Molecular Biology	Pathology	Physics	Physiology
Soil Science	Textile Technology	Veterinary Services	

**Administration:**

Accounting	Business Management	Contracting/Administration
Office Automation	Program Analyst	Library Services, etc.

Which brings me to what my role as a Program Analyst is within the USDA in New Orleans, for the Formosan Subterranean Termite Research Unit. I am responsible for overseeing from inception to completion of vital agreements (contracts) between our research agency and our various cooperators (both in the Industry and the U.S. University System). The objective of the program is to develop venues and methods of suppressing the Formosan Subterranean Termite and its destruction of properties and real estate, and historical sites. The Formosan Subterranean Termite has caused devastation to properties that cost the U.S. citizens in the millions of dollars

(1 - billion per year in direct losses, due to property damage). We are currently concentrating our efforts in the French Quarter area in New Orleans, LA which is a very prominent Historical site within USA. This is where there has been the greatest devastation from the Formosan Subterranean Termite infestation. We are working in conjunction with Louisiana State University, University of Florida, Texas A&M, University of Hawaii, as well as with China and several other Private Companies to continue research on this insect and find ways to eliminate this pest. We have several Researchers looking at varied ways to suppress this insect, including

using biological control procedures such as introduction of fungus that kills the insects; or by trying to interfere with the termite's reproductive system.

In my role I commit the monies to be obligated, ensure that the contracts are clear, concise and represent both parties and their needs fairly. I do transfer technology by keeping the stakeholders informed, ensuring that research conducted and findings are shared. I do numerous public relations, and outreach activities to educate the public on how to take measures to protect their properties from termite infestation. The U.S. Government has committed an investment of over 5 million dollars annually to deal with this problem. These are some of the examples of the multi-disciplinary work being done in modern day agriculture. The disciplines do not include just those in sciences, but also combine those in finance, sociology, engineering, information technology etc. etc. etc.

I started out as a student as my first job in USDA. I worked Full time and went to school Full time. USDA facilitated me with tuition for college which enabled me to advance my education and support my family at the same time. I've been with USDA for 10 years and have been in 4 different types of position ranging from Administrative Assistant, Personnel Assistant, Contracting Officer to Program Analyst. For me, as a non-scientist, USDA offers numerous careers in Administrative field: Accounting/ Auditing/Budget, Contracting /Procurement, EEO Management, Program Analysis, Personnel Management, Public Affairs, Marketing, etc. And that provides me with many career options to choose from.

In Conclusion, I would like to assure you that it is a very exciting, and challenging time in USDA, with new problems requiring new methods to solve them, and we invite you to join our team.

So then, Why Public Service?...

because you can gain experience in different disciplines, be able to move from place to place;  
because you want to obtain quality of life, the freedom of your own work schedule;  
because you will be rewarded with a competitive salary and benefits policy.  
because you want to work for a place that celebrates who you are, your differences & your views;  
because you want to make an IMPACT, make a difference in the world;

Thank you very much for your attention. And I encourage and invite you to visit our USDA/ARS booth No. 448 for further information on employment opportunities in my agency (ARS) within USDA.

